

Citation for published version:

Hayhoe, S 2018, An autoethnography of a hearing-impaired researcher in museum-based participatory research. in *Seminar A participatory museology*. A PARTICIPATORY MUSEOLOGY, Leeds, UK United Kingdom, 25/06/18. <<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/a-participatory-museology-tickets-46190917277>>

Publication date:
2018

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication](#)

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SEMINAR - A PARTICIPATORY MUSEOLOGY

School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies

University of Leeds, Leeds, UK

AN AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHY OF A HEARING- IMPAIRED RESEARCHER IN MUSEUM-BASED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 693229





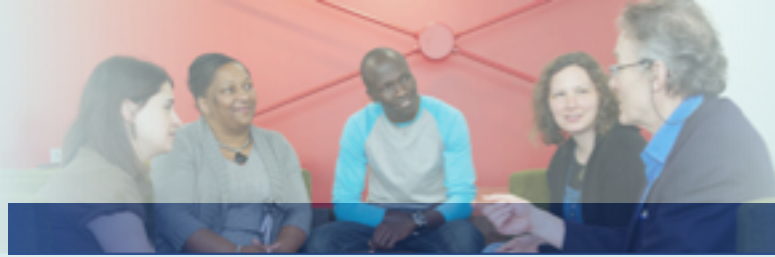
Chosen Question & Research Methodology

- The given question this study most closely represents:
 - Can you know about participatory [practice] through enacting participation — or conversely only by stepping out of this framework?
- The broader study was that of participatory research, as part of a study of access to museums by people with physical, sensory and learning access needs
- This reflection was conducted using an auto-ethnographic methodology, with my analysis being examined qualitatively (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011)

Ellis, C., Adams, T.E. & Bochner, A.P. (2011). Autoethnography: An overview. *Historical Social Research*, 36, 4, 273-290.

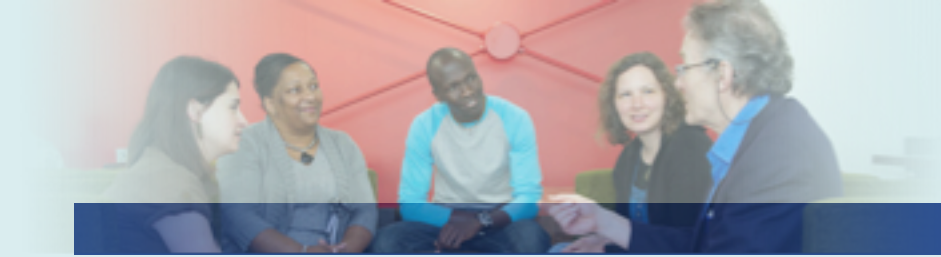
Accessible Resources for Cultural Heritage Eco-Systems (ARCHES)





The Background of the Project

- Funded by European Union Horizon 2020 Award
- Digital technology in cultural heritage increasing rapidly
- Technologies enable European citizens to engage in cultural heritage
- Technologies have potential for increasing accessibility:
 - Learning
 - Information
 - Spaces and places
- The project is anti-classification, i.e. people do not have to identify themselves as visually or hearing impaired, or as having a learning difficulty



Aims and Objectives of the Project

- ARCHES aims to create more inclusive cultural environments particularly for those with differences associated with:
 - Perception
 - Memory
 - Cognition
 - Communication
- Creating inclusive cultural environments for people with differences and difficulties associated with perception, memory, cognition and communication



Partners

Museums

Museo Thyssen-
Bornemisza (Madrid)
Lazaro-Galdiano
(Madrid,)
V&A (London)
Wallace Collection
(London)
Kunst Historisches
Musum (Vienna)
Museo de Bellas Artes
de Asturias (Oviedo)

Lead

Treelogic

Companies:

VRVis (Vienna)
Artecontacto (Barcelona)
Coprix (Belgrade)
SignTime (Vienna)

Universities

University of Bath
Open University

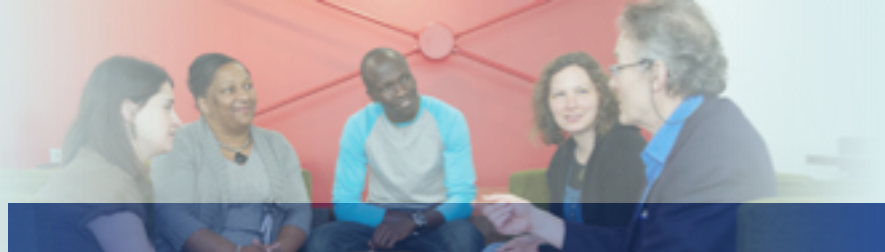


Participatory Research Method

- People with access needs attend regular sessions
- Sessions started in London at the beginning of 2017
 - Rolled out across Spain and Austria in 2018
- All those who take part in the group, including professionals and researchers, are counted as participants
- Sessions attempt to develop a community, and each participant is given a voice
- Sessions can include an exercise, feedback from groups specialising in different aspects of the project, touring galleries and exhibitions, or participating in exercises such as mystery shopping in other museums

Auto-Ethnographic Study

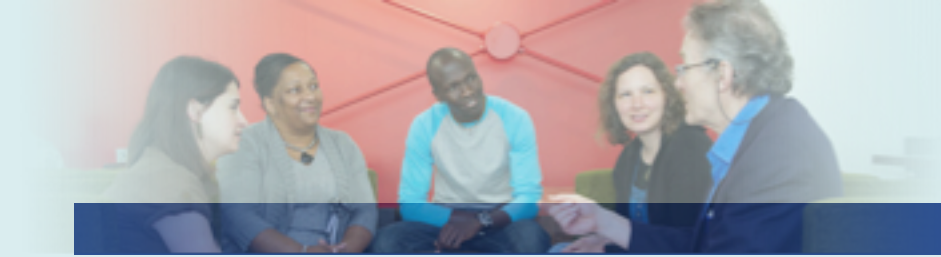




Questions & Model of Analysis

- *What challenges have I faced as a hearing-impaired researcher and co-participant in the course of this fieldwork?*
- *How can museums engage researchers who have impairments and access needs in participatory studies and practice?*
- Subjective/Objective Model of Disability for Analysis (Hayhoe, 2015)
 - Subjective Disability – practical difficulties related to my specific hearing impairment
 - Objective Disability – How I am objectified as a person with a hearing impairment

Hayhoe, S. (2017). When Gucci make hearing aids, I'll be deaf: Sensory impairment in later life, and a need to define it according to identity, In S. Holder & L. Assaf (Eds.). Cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary perspectives on inclusion: An auto-ethnography approach on individuals with disability. New York: Springer (pp.77-88).



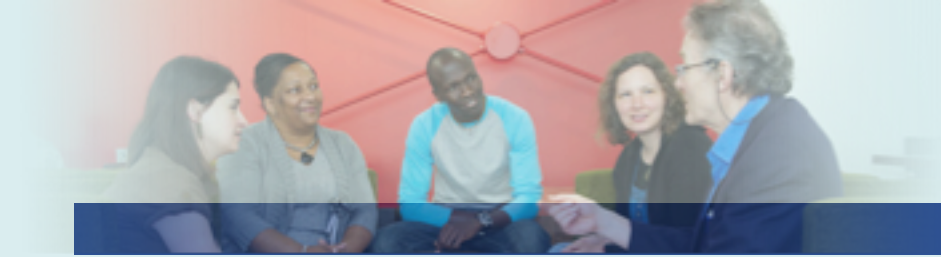
Power Issues and Tensions

- Subjectively
 - Between myself and some fellow professionals
 - Treated as a person with no hearing problem
 - Raised suspicion if hearing issues brought up
 - In groups, there was tension about whether I was a participant or a professional
- Objectively
 - I found it easier to sit with people with hearing impairments – felt more understood
 - People with other objective impairments saw me as a professional and not a person with an impairment
 - Groups of signers can have tensions with hearing impaired people



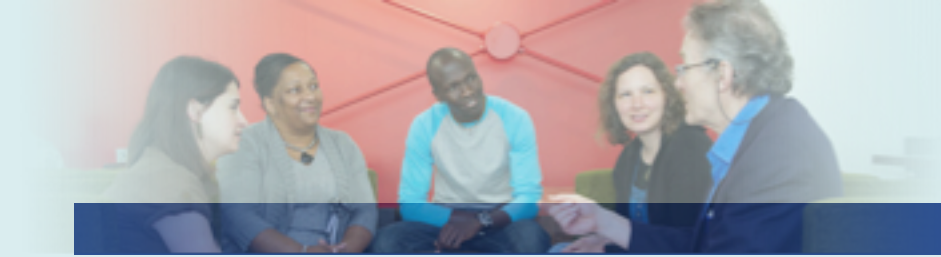
Communication Issues

- Subjectively
 - Being a professional, other participants in groups often talked to me as a “fully hearing” person
 - People with learning difficulties and mental health issues needed particular hearing-support
 - Having to concentrate on hearing for long periods caused fatigue
- Objectively
 - Museums lack general hearing loops
 - Closed captioning of tours rarely if ever exists



Inter-Cultural Differences

- Subjectively
 - Communication difficulties caused by hearing impairments were similar, as buildings similar
 - People in Spain were more communicative, with greater background noise – although more socially pleasant
 - Language differences made this problem more difficult
- Objectively
 - Participants in Madrid had more deference to me as a professional
 - Madrid rarely saw me as a hearing impaired person, thus gave little quarter for my hearing impairment



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